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SUBJECT: DARFUR - ASSESSMENT OF HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION  
PROGRAMMING

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Summary  
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¶11. In September, USAID staff conducted an assessment of non-governmental organizations (NGO) partners' humanitarian protection activities in all three Darfur states. The assessment revealed that the majority of partners are successfully protecting conflict-affected populations through beneficiary targeting, responding to sexual and gender-based violence, and coordinated assistance for vulnerable individuals. Yet further improvements are needed, particularly for responding to vulnerable cases and in establishing more effective coordination. End Summary.

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Background  
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¶12. In September, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) staff undertook an assessment of 15 NGO partners' integration of protective strategies within humanitarian assistance programs. USAID concluded that NGOs are protecting populations through beneficiary targeting, responding to sexual and gender-based violence, and camp coordination activities. Innovative strategies have been a priority for the humanitarian response to the Darfur crisis, because the crisis has been characterized by protection concerns such as forcible displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, family separation, and other issues.

¶13. USAID implements a variety of protection activities in Darfur, including human rights and rule of law initiatives, as well as humanitarian protection. The assessment undertaken in September evaluated the extent to which protective strategies were integrated into USAID/OFDA-funded humanitarian assistance programs in Darfur. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) also supports protection monitoring and discrete activities to reduce violence against women in Darfur such as strengthening rule of law, human rights monitoring, and providing alternatives to firewood collection.

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Achievements in Humanitarian Protection  
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¶14. Each NGO assessed described methods for beneficiary targeting that rely on community-based committee recommendations combined with

verification mechanisms to ensure fair and appropriate targeting. NGOs were quick to acknowledge the importance of community participation in beneficiary selection, as well as the need to spread decision-making power beyond the sheikhs and umdas. NGOs employ strategies such as female representation on food distribution committees and formation of women-only committees for vegetable seed distributions targeting female-headed households to ensure appropriate community representation. In most cases, NGOs also independently verify beneficiary lists to ensure that the most vulnerable are included.

¶ 15. Sexual and gender-based violence has been a significant protection issue in the Darfur crisis. NGOs implementing health and psychosocial activities have developed case management protocols for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence that seek to ensure strict confidentiality as well as provide appropriate medical care. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) have conducted trainings for health care workers and social workers on the clinical management of sexual and gender-based violence. Each of the seven NGOs implementing USAID/OFDA-funded health activities have participated in these or other trainings, and report that the trainings were useful in increasing staff skills for appropriate case management.

¶ 16. Referral links are another important component of case management for sexual and gender-based violence. Four NGOs implementing USAID/OFDA-supported health or psychosocial support activities indicated that they provide referral links, either to health facilities or to psychosocial support and livelihoods activities for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The referral links may occur within one agency that implements both types of activities, or between different agencies working in the same camp or community. In all cases, confidentiality of the survivor is preserved, enabling the survivor to choose whether or not to access

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the proffered services. USAID will encourage all NGO partners to strengthen referral links in their programs.

¶ 17. Camp coordination plays a key function in protective programming. Through community participation mechanisms, consistent presence, and knowledge of the camp population and assistance agencies, two USAID/OFDA NGO partners are ensuring protective programming within the camp in their role as camp coordinator. The camp coordinator function allows for tracking of vulnerable individuals within the camp to ensure that they receive general assistance, as described above, as well as any additional assistance available. In conjunction with other assistance providers in the camp, camp coordinators track vulnerable individuals such as separated or unaccompanied children, unaccompanied elders, and persons with disabilities.

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#### Recommendations for Improving Humanitarian Protection

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¶ 18. The successes noted in the assessment demonstrate that NGOs can improve the protection of beneficiaries through integration of the strategies detailed above. Yet more effort is needed to ensure that all humanitarian assistance activities incorporate protective strategies to the fullest extent possible. In particular, the strengthening of referral links, case management, and coordination mechanisms will improve humanitarian protection in Darfur.

¶ 19. While some agencies have referral links between health care services and psychosocial support services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, nearly all NGOs assessed noted that the referral links could be strengthened. NGOs noted that staff involved in health, income generation, or other programs need to be made aware of other nearby complementary activities that are accessible to beneficiaries. Enabling referral links between service providers strengthens the overall assistance package, particularly for vulnerable individuals.

¶ 10. In several locations, camp coordinators are effectively

managing assistance for vulnerable cases. However, appropriate case management for vulnerable individuals is vital for all camps and communities, and camp coordination needs to be strengthened to ensure that vulnerable cases are tracked and assisted in areas where this is not currently happening.

¶11. USAID staff also note that protection issues and programs are not well coordinated in Darfur. The successful examples of camp coordination and referral pathways are entirely dependent on the initiative and capacity of the individual NGOs working in the camp. Most USAID NGO partners participate in state level protection working groups, but in general, NGOs reported that the working group leads do not coordinate effectively. NGOs particularly wished to see more leadership from UN agencies in follow-through of individual cases and concerns, including advocacy with the Sudanese government where needed. Strengthened coordination on protection in the field is necessary to move from ad-hoc cooperation to an effective and efficient system.

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